

## KDHE Runner Earns Top 20 National Marathon Ranking

Marla Rhoden, Bureau of Health Care Facilities, has been ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation by [www.MarathonGuide.com](http://www.MarathonGuide.com) as one of the 2005 USA Outstanding Marathoners and one of only 20 women ranked in the United States.

MarathonGuide described their national rankings in these terms:

“These are the runners who work the hardest at the marathon and who give the most to our sport. They provide the competition at most of the 300 marathons that take place in the USA each year. They run hard to run well – even without the promise of major prize money – it’s about the running, nothing else. In short, these are the committed runners we aspire to be.”



To earn a place in the national rankings, athletes must have competed in at least three marathons in 2005 and placed among the top three finishers in three races. Rhoden finished second in the Olathe Marathon, second in the Eisenhower Marathon and won the Mountain Home Marathon for Kenya. Her best time in 2005 was 3 hours, 17 minutes and 41 seconds. The time difference between the number one ranked runner and Rhoden was only 19 minutes.

Rhoden started running in April 1979. A co-worker in the Budget Division, her first job with the state of Kansas, had her eyes on a guy they worked with, and he went to the YMCA to run on his lunch hour so Marla’s friend suggested they start running at lunchtime.

They went running, her friend caught the guy and married him, had a baby, and quit running. Rhoden was the one who kept running. Why did she keep running?

“My motivation was that I had two little kids, and I didn't want to become one of the tired looking wives/mothers I saw around me all the time,” she explained. Today Marla is married to a runner, too. Husband, Brad, works in the Curtis Building for the Kansas Department of Commerce.

Rhoden’s focus now is to make the Boston Marathon on April 17 her 100th career marathon. It will be her 15th Boston Marathon, the 20th anniversary of her first Boston Marathon, and her 100th marathon, and to celebrate reaching age 50. One of the things that she cherishes is being the first grandmother to finish the Grandma's Marathon (Duluth, MN) the three times she's run it.

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“Of course, Grandma's Marathon is the only one that gives an award to the first grandmother to finish!” she said.

Rhoden serves as a mentor and motivator to those in her running circle. As a 50-year-old experienced athlete, she offers advice and encouragement to runners young and old, offering feedback for their efforts.

“Marla’s advice is always positive. She will only talk about her achievements when pressured. She never brags about her accomplishments,” says running partner Sharon Wenger.

For more information about the rankings and marathons, please go to:  
<http://www.marathonguide.com/features/Articles/2005USAMarathonHallOfFame.cfm>.